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THE MIGRATION OF THE GODS.

THE

MIGRATION OF THE GODS:

135476

A

METRICAL OFFERING

AT THE

DEDICATORY EXERCISES

OF THE

MICHIGAN WORLD'S FAIR BUILDING

CHICAGO, APRIL 29, 1893.

BY S. B. M'CRACKEN.

LANSING:
ROBERT SMITH & CO., PRINTERS AND BINDERS.
1893.

Who serves his fellow man to purpose best.
Best serves the Gods, and meets their full behest.

THE MIGRATION OF THE GODS.

As infant tottering with unsteady feet,
Uncertain of the fate its step may meet,
We here would fain the Muses' favor ask,
Or failing which, fails the allotted task.
Unschooled in classic lore of ancient time,
Will this, our essay, prove mistake, or crime,
If we the Mythic Deities invoke
To speak the thought that's worthy to be spoke?
Worthy, we trust, the burning thought may prove,
That's dedicate to the fair State we love,
For not less fervent glows my thought of thee,
Proud Michigan, Queen of the inland sea,
Than glowed the thought of Grecian bard, who sung
Of Hellas' glories, in his faultless tongue.

When passed the Golden Age of Grecian light,
Perchance to some far sphere her Gods took flight—
Perchance have rested in serene repose,
Biding the new birth from Time's labor-throes.
Afar, or near, for twice a thousand years,
A light new breaking on the world appears—
The Gods, e'er faithful to their office high,
May to their once abode again draw nigh,
Ready for mortals' weal again to strive,
To mortals' worthy needs their aid to give.

Zeus and Apollo, from Olympus' height,
Hear the petition that we now indite;

Our wish you know—we need not give it speech,
More than t' invoke the prescient Gods to teach,
As best may suit their purpose and their mode,
Our untried footsteps on the sacred road.
The prayer is heard. Beneath the Attic shade,
Apollo with the Muses stands arrayed;
Thus speaks the Oracle the answer fair
The Gods ordain to meet our simple prayer:

"Thus do the Gods declare their will and choice:
Comes o'er the sea from Western Land, a Voice,
Which makes proclaim to every land and clime,
That year four hundredth from the favored time
When bold Columbo placed the flag of Spain—
(Or fame, or saintly crown, or gold, to gain?)
Upon Salvador's semi-tropic soil,
(Fruition high of hopes, and fears, and toil),
Observed will be by 'memorative fete
At 'hest of Americ's imperial state.

"When breaks the anniversary's glad day,
The Gods will westward make aerial way—
O'er Western land will light Parnassian fires,
And tune in Western land their magic lyres.
And fitly chosen is the place of meet—
Inland, far westward from Atlantic's seat,
A land much likened to Hellenic clime,
Lies cradled 'twixt fair lakes. In summer time,
Yieldful of grains and many-sorted fruits;
Her autumn dress of multitinted suits
Delights the eye, and when 'tis shed
In vales ambrosial, forms most fitting bed,
Whereon the Gods may rest in soft recline,
Inhaling rich ripe odors of the nut and pine.
The thousand autumn glories of the place,

With floral mantles that the springtime grace,
Compensate for stern winter's rugged hold,
And healthful blasts from boreal regions cold.
A native Goddess wields her patron wand
As mythic guardian o'er this Western land;
She will us greet, with this divine decree,
SI QUÆRIS PENINSULAM, AMŒNAM CIRCUMSPICE.

"Lake-gemmed, with rivers bright and clear,
And cover for the antelered elk and deer,
With wealth of quarry, forest, and of mine,
And salt abundant from the native brine—
Beauty and wealth, in ample treasury,
Both dower these, the fair Peninsulæ.
But more than beauty in her outward guise,
And more than wealth, the greatly valued prize,
Breathes the firm fibre of the civil State,
The trusted honor of the magistrate,
The knowledge, virtue, valor of her sons,
And daughters also, equal dowered ones.
Her constitution, charter of the free,
Doth sacred right of conscience guarantee—
Pledges the State to rear the temples high,
Of science, learning, and philanthropy.
For child bereft, dependent or neglect,
The State a school and shelter doth erect—
If gift of sight or hearing be denied,
A special school for either is supplied.
But crowning all her works beneficent,
Is the State's good caring for her sad dement—
Where mind is wrecked, or reason overthrown,
The State adopts the subject as her own.
And of society's parental care,
The feeble-minded, too, may claim a share—

And why not so? There is no certain rule
That separates the wise man from the fool—
All grades there are of virtue and of sense,
Of moral and of mental competence.
The State builds schools, where those by nature bright
May trim the lamp of intellectual light—
Then why not also, where the mind is dark,
Lend a just succor to the feeble spark?

"Thus framed in symmetry, the social pact
Conforms what seemed a fancy dream, to fact—
At least with those who hold the commonwealth
A joint copartnership—the State in health;
Makes practical the precept once laid down
By one who wore imperial Tiber's crown:
Who serves his fellow man to purpose best,
Best serves the Gods, and meets their full behest.

"A State conditioned as the one we see,
Grown to its strength in half a century,
Much to the favor of the Gods must owe—
Much more the Gods their favor will bestow.
In Hellas' ancient groves and temples, when
The Gods inspired the higher thoughts of men,
The germs of highest thought, till then concealed,
Were thus to willing mortals there revealed:
Democracy, the rule in civil state—
Equality of rank, her heir legitimate—
Learning and science, made universal, free—
A broad and deep and firm philosophy—
Poetry and art, to touch the finer sense—
The skill of architect, pure ethics, eloquence.
E'en the great wheel, whose Herculean power
Will quicken at Columbia's pregnant hour,
But proves the law proclaimed of ancient date,

For then the giant wheel will demonstrate,
When from its center-shaft its force is hurled,
How lev'rage right applied may move the world.
These elements of eastern culture high
Are reproduced beneath the western sky
By growth most wondrous — cities spring amain,
And states, that cluster in a magic chain—
Like as grave Wisdon, in full armor dight,
And stature grown, sprang from the brain of Light —
Like mirage, phantom-traced, that quickly pass,
Or solar pictures 'pressed upon the glass.

"But seventy suns have crossed the equi-line
Since the fair site where now is Learning's shrine,
(Then virgin wilderness and flow'ry plain),
First knew the track of hardy settlers' wain.
Environed was't by gently sloping hills—
By pure springs watered, and by gurgling rills—
High bluffs were there, and flowing at their base,
A river bright its winding course did trace.
No lovlier spot need mortal hope to find,
With river, hill, and native grove combined—
The Dryads here might make their dwelling place,
As scene well suited to the Nymphean race.
The pioneers on this inviting spot,
Vowed there to make their home — to cast their lot,
And build a city — their first edifice
The primal architect's unique device —
An arbor, framed from boughs and nursling trees,
A sylvan offering to the Deities.

"They builded well — far better than they thought —
The Gods from far the fav'ring omens wrought —
O'er hill and vale, o'er river, rill and spring,

A patron Goddess spread her fost'ring wing.
Where first an arbor, habitation lone,
Was forest-reared but seven decades gone,
Now stands a city, populous and grand,
Her fame wide reaching, known in every land—
Her people cultured, generous and wise—
Her temple-towers pointing to the skies,
Attest that here each citizen is free
To bow at shrine of fav'rite Deity.
But here alone to Truth is dedicaté
The Temple builded by the Civil State;
Here pupils of all creeds and nations dwell,
And cast their offerings in the crucible
From which, in last analysis, shall come,
The One Great Truth, the Open Sesamum.

"From this Imperial Temple has gone forth
An army potent, east, west, south and north—
They hold in nation-councils honored seats—
They mould the structure of new-forming states—
Within the State that doth the Temple own,
Their thought inspires the parliament and throne.
Its revenues are ample and secure—
Its life and usefulness will long endure,
With broad'ning and expanding energy,
'Till the whole continent shall bow to its decree.

"A new Olympus: As from its height,
In Eastern land, Olympus symbols Light,
So in the West, from moral altitude,
Shall come the purest Light, the highest Good.
A modern Athens: Not perfect was the life
That breathed from Athens ancient—'tis in strife
And friction of the moral elements,

We find the mainspring of our best intents.
Yet light that shone from ancient Attica,
Beacons the intellectual world today.

"When twice a thousand years have rolled away,
What tribute will our modern Athens lay
On shrines and altars that will then appear?
At door of temple that will then uprear?
This may it do: Inspire a higher life
Than finds expression in a sordid strife—
Ordain device whereby the race be freed
From hateful competition, lust and greed.
Where squalor, want, and degradation crawl
Past pillared portico and gilded hall,
Seek where the evil lies, and 'ply the cure;
This may it do; and close the page impure,
Where, lone and suffering, the stranger maid,
By passion or by perfidy betrayed,
(No friendly hand to sooth her fevered head),
Yields up her life upon the abort bed—
A tale too often writ by flippant pen,
That wrings the hearts of Gods, if not of men.

"All doctorates may merge in one degree,
And take diploma of Sociology:—
'Who serves his fellow man to purpose best,
Best serves the Gods, and meets their full behest.'
Here be the purpose high that should attain,
More than desire of commercial gain,
With those who, in Arbor City's shade,
Invoke the Gods their high intents to aid—
Nor suffer prejudice to sentinel
The halls where all the Gods should dwell—
Nor yet to him whose counter thought may shock,
Prescribe the poisoned chalice or the block.

Thus fitted for the Dieties' abode,
Their future benediction is bestowed
Upon the worthy State Peninsular,
As fully as on Grecian isles afar;
And o'er the Athens builded in the West,
A new Acropolis shall rise, at their behest,
Illumed by purest light from heaven, *
So far as light to mortals may be given."

Thus spake the Oracle; and so we turn
To common earthly things, in hopes to earn
A trifle of approval or applause,
As to its close our feeble essay draws.
Some legacy should each and every one
Leave as a souvenir when he is gone—
And all men do, in more or less degree,
Leave to the world a certain legacy.
Though not in statues, castles, monuments,
Or mechanic device the brain invents,
Or fame achieved in forum or on field,
Yet every one, howe'er obscure, must yield
Some tribute to the world, or good, or ill,
Though boldly stamped, faint, or invisible.
Desire to make a record for the good
Makes ambition, virtue; hence have stood
In front rank of Michigan's worthy thanes,
Brave Lewis Cass—all honor to his manes; †
Mason, boy ruler of the infant State;
In years and honors, none more great
Than Felch, at eighty-seven, clear and bright;
Bingham, firm champion of the right;
Blair, helmsman trusted in the time of strife;

* Vide Dr. Tappan's inaugural address as President of the University.
† Literally, "ma-nes," but popularly rendered as in the text.

Bagley, the large-hearted—when in life
The friend most gen'rous. Not farther to extend
The honored list, we trust will not offend—
Suffice it, that of the gub'natorial niche,
They lastly all converge to make it Rich.
If now we turn toward the Senate hall,
Howard and Chandler stand the peers of all;
In Cooley's broad and clear judicial mind,
Justinian, Solon, Blackstone, are combined;
Of those in schoolmen's work who don the gown,
Tappan and Angell wear, as well, the crown;
Pere Gabriel Richard, nor here, nor yet,
Priest, patriot, statesman, must we quite forget.

Last but not least, to merited renown,
The World's Columbian heroes will go down.
Palmer: No sovereign ever crowned,
In history past, a world's allegiance owned;
Here the plain President is the first King
To whom all nations make their offering—
So, let us hope, the Union here may prove
Perpetual—the pledge and bond of universal love.
To managers of Michigan's display,
Certes that one and all will freely say,
Well done: With resource at their hand
Their work our full approval must command—
And thus we pay the parting tribute brief,
To management, with Weston as their chief;
Except to say, the ladies on the board
Have proved the wisdom that their aid secured.

Much more of Michigan we might justly say:
Of men illustrious in her history—
Her education, culture, commerce, arts—
Might sing the praises of her various parts—

But of her parts and of her as a whole
We here must close the inventory roll.
The building that we dédicate today,
With other features of the State display,
Must well and full and visibly present
Her fair proportions and her increment—
If short of this, the fault, if such there be,
Is fault from which the management is free.

The bard's adieu is brief and quickly said—
His tribute on the altar here is laid—
If to the honor of his native State,
This high reward will fully compensate
For labor given; e'en if he confess
To some ambition, 'tis nor more, nor less,
Than virtue will approve. So part we now,
With friendship's clasp and patriot vow,
Trusting with next four centuries' close, agen
To meet—'till which, 'till when, adieu—Amen.

NOTE.—If we can draw upon the Ideal to embellish and adorn the Actual, it is a legitimate conjunction. This has been the endeavor in the foregoing effort at a poem. However real a belief in the Gods may have been to the ancients, the reference here will of course be understood as purely ideal. As to the verbiage which forms the greater part of the poem, it is perhaps well enough to say that the Gods are supposed to communicate with each other and with mortals, by impression and sensation, rather than through the clumsy medium of spoken language. The writer therefore who seeks to express in words what the Gods are supposed to say, must run the hazard of doing so but indifferently. So far as the piece may depart from the literal in its mythological references, the departures are assumed to be justified on the plea of poetic license. That the piece is above criticism in its construction and minor details is more than the writer could expect.